

I - INTRODUCTION

This is the 17th annual report to Congress on voting practices in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council. It is submitted in compliance with Section 406 of Public Law 101-246. It covers voting in 1999. The report statistically measures the voting of UN member states at the 54th UNGA session in the fall of 1999 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section II). In addition to an alphabetical listing of all countries, the report presents the voting record by geographic regions, by selected bloc groupings, and in a side-by-side comparison with the amount of U.S. aid given to each country in fiscal year 1999. It also lists and describes UNGA resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groups (Section III). Security Council resolutions for the entire year are described, and voting on them is tabulated (Section IV). A final section pulls together information from the other sections and presents it by country (Section V).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 54th session of the General Assembly opened on September 14 and held 88 plenary sessions before recessing on December 23. It adopted 294 resolutions, a little more than in the past few years, but still below the 332 of 1990. This reflects the success of the United States and others in their effort to reduce the number of resolutions—by combining some issues, considering others only every two or three years, and dropping some entirely. The subjects of the resolutions covered the full gamut of UN concerns: security, arms control, economic issues, human rights, budget and financial matters, and legal questions. Those resolutions on which recorded votes were taken continued to be primarily about arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 294 resolutions adopted, 76.9% (226) were adopted by consensus. This figure and those of recent years (78% in 1998, 75.2% in 1997, 72.9% in 1996, 76.6% in 1995, and 77.4% in 1994) illustrate the high rate of consensus agreement in the work of the General Assembly. Combining the 226 resolutions and the 86 of 87 decisions adopted by consensus, the percentage of questions adopted by consensus was 81.9%.

Voting Coincidence with the United States

On non-consensus issues, i.e., those on which a vote was taken, the average overall General Assembly voting coincidence of all UN members with the United States in 1999 was 41.8%, down from 44.2% in 1998, 46.7% in 1997,

Voting Practices in the United Nations - 1999

49.4% in 1996, and 50.6% in 1995. This decline in the past four years reverses the steady and dramatic increase in the several years following the end of the Cold War. (See the graphs at the end of this section.) The 50.6% in 1995 was the first time the coincidence figure had exceeded 50% since 1978, and is more than three times the low point of 15.4% in 1988.

When consensus resolutions are factored in as votes identical to those of the United States, a much higher measure of agreement with U.S. positions is reached. This figure (86.4%), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, has been in the 86-88% range since it was first included in this report in 1993. It was 88.3% in 1998, 87.3% in 1997, 87.3% also in 1996, 88.2% in 1995, 88.8% in 1994, and 88.3% in 1993.

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests (57.2%) is once again higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (41.8%). The graphs at the end of this section illustrate this point. A side-by-side comparison of important and overall votes for each UN member is at the end of Section III.

The following table illustrates the gradual decrease in voting coincidence with the United States since the post-Cold War high of 50.6% in 1995. This decrease is reflected also in the votes on human rights and Middle East issues. The trend had been generally up on arms control votes, but dropped to a 5-year low in 1999. (See also the graph on votes by issue categories at the end of this section.)

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
1999	57.9%	22.7%	52.5%	41.8%
1998	64.0%	22.5%	62.8%	44.2%
1997	65.8%	26.2%	61.9%	46.7%
1996	62.3%	28.3%	68.3%	49.4%
1995	60.9%	35.2%	81.0%	50.6%

As in past years, Israel (90.0%) and the United Kingdom (75.8%) were among the highest in voting coincidence with the United States. Micronesia, Uzbekistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Marshall Islands, France, Monaco, Estonia, and Germany were also in the top 10. Hungary tied with Germany. Most members of the Western European and Others group (WEOG) continued to score high coincidence levels; the average was 67.1%, which is up from 65.2% in 1998 but down from 70.9% in 1997. There has been a growing divergence

I - Introduction

between the United States and the European Union (which, at 68.5% in 1999, was up from 66.7% in 1998 but down from 73.0% in 1997). The Eastern European group also scored high again; the average was 61.7%, the same as in 1998 but down from 68.6% in 1997 and 1996. After this group's meteoric rise in coincidence with the United States following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, it largely matched the coincidence level of the Western European countries before its decline in the past two years. The NATO and Nordic countries again in 1999 rose in voting coincidence with the United States, but the other geographic and political groups went down again in 1999. (See the graph at the end of this section.)

Eighteen countries agreed with the U.S. vote less than 25% of the time: Cambodia, China, Comoros, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, India, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Myanmar (Burma), Rwanda, Syria, Tanzania, Vietnam, and Yemen.

Realization of U.S. Priorities

At the 54th General Assembly, realization of U.S. priorities was again mixed. U.S. arrears in payment of assessed dues, and the linking of arrears payments to UN reforms, continued to make it difficult to exert U.S. leadership at the United Nations during much of the session. The U.S. embargo of Cuba—viewed as extraterritorial, interventionist, restrictive of free trade, and contradictory to the post-Cold War spirit of cooperation—remained a contentious issue. The United States had the following successes—and failures—on arms control issues, budget matters, human rights questions, Middle East resolutions, and other issues:

— **On arms control issues**, the United States supported a more realistic alternative to past General Assembly resolutions on the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Also, the annual resolution on the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** was constructive and included good language urging North Korea and Iraq to comply with their obligations regarding peaceful use of nuclear energy. The United States also supported a resolution convening a conference on restricting **illicit trade in small arms** and a resolution on adherence to nuclear test moratoriums and ratification of the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**. Unfortunately, a resolution on the **U.S.-Russia Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty** and a resolution calling for a new nuclear disarmament agenda were adopted over U.S. objections. The United States argued that the ABM resolution would prejudge the ongoing U.S. Russia discussions on amending the ABM Treaty and that a **new arms control agenda** was unnecessary. An unbalanced and discriminatory resolution called on **Israel** not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons, while ignoring

other threats of proliferation in the region. No progress was made on a resolution with respect to promoting negotiations on a **fissile material cut-off** treaty.

— **On budget and management issues, election of a U.S. representative to an important budget committee.** The U.S. candidate was elected to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), which influences the direction and management of the UN budget and administrative practices. We lost elections to the ACABQ in 1997 and 1998. Reelection to this committee was a priority because the United States, as the largest financial contributor to the United Nations, has a strong interest in ensuring the wise use of UN resources. Also, U.S. legislation established U.S. membership on the ACABQ as a condition for payment of tranche three of U.S. arrears to the United Nations. We did not succeed, however, in our campaign to reelect the U.S. representative on the **Joint Inspection Unit**, which conducts independent reviews of UN system programs and seeks to ensure that these programs are carried out with optimum use of resources. A resolution reaffirming the creation of the **Office of Internal Oversight Services** and preserving its independence and operating procedures was a significant accomplishment. On the other hand, we did not succeed in gaining approval of a UN **budget** based on zero nominal growth (ZNG), i.e., a level not exceeding \$2.533 billion. The United Nations adopted, instead, a slightly higher budget of \$2,535,689,200, and the United States disassociated from consensus adoption of the budget.

— **Adoption of U.S.-initiated resolutions on the human rights situation** in Kosovo and the former Yugoslavia again in 1999. Adoption of these and other resolutions on human rights reinforced the strong message that such matters are not purely internal issues. Also, the General Assembly adopted other country-specific human rights resolutions cosponsored or supported by the United States: human rights in Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, and Rwanda. The Assembly also adopted resolutions on support for periodic and genuine elections, prevention of mass exoduses, elimination of religious intolerance, protection of cultural diversity, protection of indigenous people, assistance to refugees, elimination of racial discrimination, and strengthening of crime prevention. We succeeded in having action deferred on an unhelpful anti-death penalty resolution that we actively opposed. We found it necessary, also, to vote against some human rights resolutions—globalization and human rights, unilateral coercive measures, right to development, and a perennial Cuba-sponsored resolution on travel—because of problems with some of the text or concepts. There was no resolution noting the human rights violations in Cuba.

— **Adoption of resolutions on terrorism, transnational organized crime, and drugs**, moving forward the struggle against these transnational criminal activities.

I - Introduction

— **Adoption of resolutions that contain language on the benefits of trade liberalization.** These resolutions also emphasized the importance of trade as an engine of growth and development, the importance for developing countries of promoting a favorable environment for attracting foreign investment, and the need for governments to create an enabling environment for business, including through sound macroeconomic, fiscal, and development policies, rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts that promote efficiency, fairness, and competitiveness. However, a resolution on financial crises was adopted over U.S. objection; it surpassed the mandate of the General Assembly and interfered in the normal course of business of the international financial institutions.

— **On Middle East issues, Israeli credentials were again adopted** without comment despite the efforts by some again in 1999 to make them invalid for the occupied territories. However, the resolutions on the Middle East were again unbalanced and unhelpful to the peace process. And, even after the progress made at Sharm el Sheikh and with the final status negotiations under way between Israel and the Palestinians, it was not possible to agree on a “positive” resolution to note the progress made by the parties in the peace process. Israel continued to be excluded from the General Assembly’s Asia caucus group. And efforts by the United States and others to give Israel temporary membership in the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), though not successful at year’s end, continued in 2000 and it now appears that they will be successful.

— **Establishment of a follow-on UN mission in Haiti** to consolidate the gains of earlier missions in building democracy, strong institutions, and prosperity in that country.

— **Adoption of a resolution on the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem of computers** that raised awareness of the problem and urged effective remediation efforts and contingency planning.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council was again in 1999 a major focus of U.S. attention in the United Nations. The continuing tendency toward consensus among its members facilitated the Council’s adoption of 65 resolutions during the year, fewer than during the post-Cold War peak of Security Council action in 1992-1994, but far more than during the Cold War era when Council action was often frustrated. The Council also issued 34 presidential statements; these are consensus documents issued by the Council president on behalf of the members. The large number of resolutions adopted and statements issued reflects the continuing reliance of member countries on Security Council action to

Voting Practices in the United Nations - 1999

assist in resolving threats to peace and security following the end of the Cold War.

The Security Council was again heavily involved in giving direction to UN peacekeeping and mediation efforts throughout the world in 1999. These efforts are described in Section IV.

Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were again high. Most resolutions were adopted unanimously: 58 out of 65 (89%). One resolution was blocked by a veto (by China on a resolution to extend the UN Preventive Deployment Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). There were 12 negative votes—including one by the United States—against a Security Council resolution demanding that NATO cease using force in Kosovo. There were 14 abstentions out of the 1,005 votes cast on the 67 resolutions introduced. The abstentions were by China (2 on Kosovo, 2 on Iraq, and 1 on admission of Nauru to UN membership); by Russia (2 on Iraq, 2 in the Balkans on peacekeeping in Macedonia and Kosovo, and 1 on Haiti); by Malaysia (2 on Iraq); by France (1 on Iraq); and by Namibia (1 on Western Sahara). See the table on voting summaries at the end of Section IV.

FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

The format and presentation of this report are consistent with provisions of PL 101-246, and the methodology employed is the same since the report's inception.

This report also includes an additional column in the tables in Section II (Overall Votes), which presents the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, we have credited to each country a portion of the 226 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 97 recorded plenary votes. Each country's participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in plenary (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total of plenary votes. Similarly, the report adds to the tables in Section III (Important Votes) an additional column presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including important consensus resolutions as additional identical votes. These added columns, by including consensus actions, provide another perspective on UN activity. In our view, they reflect more accurately the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. The percentages in the last column, using the older methodology, are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or

I - Introduction

No; not included are those instances when either abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes major, in the percentage results. Inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables readers to include them in calculating voting coincidence percentages if they wish to do so. The percentages in the second column from the right reflect more fully the activity of the General Assembly. However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes. Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either column. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to us and less support on a resolution we consider more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in one or two coincidence figures.

A country's voting record in the United Nations is only one dimension of its relations with the United States. Bilateral economic, strategic, and political issues are often more directly important to U.S. interests. Nevertheless, a country's behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the United States, a point the Secretary of State regularly makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. ambassadors. This is also why copies of this report are presented to UN member foreign ministries throughout the world and to member state missions to the United Nations in New York. The Security Council and the General Assembly are arguably the most important international bodies in the world, dealing as they do with such vital issues as threats to peace and security, disarmament, development, humanitarian relief, human rights, the environment, and narcotics—all of which can and do directly affect major U.S. interests.

Questions about this report may be directed to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the Department of State.

